

# **Western states set goal for reducing emissions**

**California helps lead effort to combat greenhouse gas emissions by 2020.**

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PHOENIX – Eight Western U.S. states and Canadian provinces on Wednesday staked out a regional goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, partly by creating a trading block for pollution credits and requiring less-polluting autos.

Governors and premiers whose states and provinces belong to the Western Climate Initiative agreed the region would reduce emissions by 15 percent below 2005 levels within 13 years.

The group consists of Arizona, California, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah and Washington and the provinces of British Columbia and Manitoba. Several other states are observing and could join in the future.

The issue of greenhouse gases and their warming impact on climate change is important for the region because it affects concerns ranging from drought to air quality.

Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski said the regional bloc was "leading the way for North America in adopting real measures and programs to combat global warming and to secure economic and environmental opportunity."

The regional goal represents an aggregation of goals set individually by the participating states and provinces and does not change those goals, officials said.

Governors of the U.S. states involved except Utah created the WCI in February, pledging to work together to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Utah, British Columbia and Manitoba subsequently joined the WCI, and a joint announcement by the eight states and provinces Wednesday said all agreed to the regional goal.

"Our collective commitment will build a successful regional system to be linked with other regional efforts across the nation and eventually the world," California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said in a prepared statement released with the announcement.

Each individual state and province will take steps on its own but collectively they are committed to design a market-based system such as a cap-and-trade program planned by California.

Also, the U.S. states involved are supporting California's bid for a federal waiver to be allowed to impose tougher limits on automobile tailpipe emissions, officials said.

"We all need that" to provide a regional solution, said Sarah Cottrell, energy and environment policy adviser to New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson.

Steps being taken by individual states include mandating use of renewable energy sources, imposing performance standards on new power plants and purchasing alternative-fuel vehicles.

The trading program, intended to reduce overall emissions by providing a monetary incentive for industries to reduce emissions, would involve multiple economic sectors, including energy and transportation but key issues in its design remain to be worked out, according to policy advisers to the governors.

The WCI members have set an August 2008 deadline for designing the market-based mechanism.

Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano said the states need to act because the federal government "is choosing to delay action."

Napolitano told Arizona reporters that the regional goal likely would not require outright prohibitions on construction of new coal-fired power plants in the region.

However, the traditional technology of burning pulverized coal "is really becoming outdated" and most states will look toward alternatives ways to use coal, said Steve Owens, director of the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality. "That's the trend."

Spokesmen for several environmental groups welcomed the goal, which Sierra Club spokesman Rob Smith said was "a good first step but it's a modest one compared to all that needs to be done."

Added Smith: "Hopefully this will lead to some pressure for Congress to take this step on a national level."

David Van't Hof, Kulongoski's sustainability and renewable energy adviser, said there are no compliance mechanisms within the agreement other than monitoring. However, he added that a state that doesn't provide promised reductions presumably could be kicked out of the partnership.